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ABSTRACT

Addressed to British companies doing business overseas, this briefing paper offers recommendations on practical steps to combat exploitative child labor while explaining why action without the provision of alternative incomes could drive children into higher risk areas of the informal economy. The paper explains that if sufficient resources are not available, then the interests of the children involved may be best served by encouraging employers to end exploitative practices without automatically discarding child workers. The paper recommends that development assistance be provided for alternative incomes and local capacity building; that the new ILO (International Labour Organization) convention be supported; and that effective codes of practice be promoted among British companies operating overseas and British overseas employers, including the government of the United Kingdom. The role of consumer education is dealt with entirely on pages 6-7. The rehabilitation and education of released children is dealt with briefly on pages 20-21. (JPB)

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WORLD VISION
Practical Christian Caring

Offering Hope, Not Despair -
Eradicating child Labour
Without putting child workers on the streets

World Vision is a long standing advocate for international action against exploitative child labour. In many of the 80 developing countries in which World Vision works children are engaged in hazardous occupations, often working long hours and in some instances trapped in conditions of virtual slavery through debt bondage. World Vision believes that exploitative child labour must be stopped, and that a vital part of action against such practices is the provision of resources for alternative incomes for children and their families.

This briefing offers recommendations on practical steps to combat exploitative labour whilst explaining why action without the provision of alternative incomes could simply drive children into higher risk areas of the informal economy. The briefing goes on to explain that if sufficient resources are not available, then the interests of the children involved may be best served by encouraging employers to end exploitative practices without automatically discarding child workers.

Summary of Recommendations (pp13-15)

Provision of Development Assistance - For alternative incomes and local capacity building.

Support for the new ILO Convention - Which seeks to clarify and address the least tolerable forms of child labour. This Convention should include strengthened sections on international co-operation and child trafficking.

The Promotion of effective codes of practice - Encouraging responsible action by British companies operating overseas, and British overseas employers, including the UK government.

BRIEFING

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Exploitative Labour

The World Vision partnership of development NGOs is currently the world's largest non-governmental investor in children, with innovative child assistance programmes in some 80 developing countries. World Vision recognises that cultural concepts and understandings of child development differ greatly and an appreciation of local views of childhood is essential to sustainable action on the issue of child labour. World Vision's starting point is that the ideal and most desirable situation is one in which children undertake no labour, but instead are free to pursue their education in the context of an economically secure family. World Vision deplores suggestions that child labour is an unchangeable reality, a fact of life to be accepted with resignation, however, we also accept that the ideal goal of eradicating child labour entirely will be achieved only over time. Obstacles which must be addressed include poverty, inadequate aid levels, lack of enforcement mechanisms and the danger of only pushing economically marginalised families deeper into economic insecurity.

World Vision has encountered child labour in many of the countries in which it works and recognises that often the activities in which children are engaged are deeply harmful. In these instances this work is regarded as `exploitative,' this is work which is detrimental to the child's welfare, development and health, including occupations in hazardous industries. Such exploitative labour is often characterised by the employment of very young children (under 12yrs), very long working hours, the presence of some form of debt bondage, or employment in harmful and dangerous conditions. Child labour is a growing problem. Local NGOs estimate that up to a third of all family income within Latin America is from child labour, and the ILO estimates that the number of 5-14 year old child labourers globally has reached 250million. The vast majority of these children, 153 million, work in Asia.

Where World Vision has encountered exploitative child labour it has acted to assist the children and families involved. Projects in many of the developing world's major cities have offered informal education to children working on the streets, in some cases these projects have assisted with the rehabilitation of child prostitutes. Elsewhere, where a high risk of children becoming involved in hazardous labour exists World Vision undertakes preventative programmes such as Gender in Development projects in northern Thailand. Interventions to assist those already engaged in dangerous occupations are typified by southern India where World Vision has helped children employed in the highly dangerous fireworks and match industries. Projects in India also assist children in the lock making industry in Aligarh, the brass industry in Moradabad and gem polishing in Jaipur. Through its work of providing direct assistance to children and families caught up in labour in these industries World Vision has developed project methodologies to enable a sustainable escape from child labour, examples of which are summarised in Appendix A below.

The innovative approach taken by World Vision in India has concentrated on ensuring that children once released from labour do not drift back into work, or become victims once more of debt bondage. These child labour projects have bought bonded child labourers out of slavery, by paying off family debt, often less than £50. World Vision includes within debt

purchasing initiatives provision for debt management education and also income generation assistance for families. World Vision India staff believe that development projects which take account of the entire family situation offer the best chance for ending exploitative labour, although this is a painstaking and long-term approach. As a result of debt bondage initiatives World Vision child labour projects have freed some 203 bonded child labourers from one of the worst forms of exploitative child labour. In co-operation with the government of India World Vision has also established day schools for child workers in Andhra Pradesh.

Experience from India, and elsewhere, highlights the fact that action against exploitative child labour must respond not only to the needs of the child, but also to those of the family. Ultimately the scandal of exploitative child labour is rooted in poverty. The implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes in developing states against a background of falling aid levels from major donors is not conducive to the fight against exploitative child labour. World Vision's own research has shown that the contribution of a child's earnings usually increases a families income by a third or more[1].

Box 1 - Poverty and Child Labour

"To combat child labour there must be a review of state policies and programmes regarding equitable participation in the primary economic activities of the countryside, from where they were often edged out in the first place. The thousands who trek to the cities everyday do so to escape difficulties in the countryside. In the rural areas working children are part of a marginalised group of farmers and labourers. Our understanding therefore is that when addressing child labour we must also address the issue of poverty, we must be radical. We must be prepared to shed light on economic and social relationships and structures, exposing areas needing change and calling for the more equitable distribution of opportunities and means of income. In our country for example we hope to reduce the pressures causing child labour by undertaking advocacy on the issue of agrarian reform."

Evita Perez, National Director, World Vision Philippines

Children, therefore, work to sustain life in conditions of poverty. They work to help feed their families or to ensure personal survival in countries with under-resourced social safety nets. They also work because of the willingness of others to exploit the poor through debt bondage and in some cases physical coercion. Although exploitative child labour may bring income into the family home and with it immediate benefit, and it has long term negative impacts for both the child and their society.

Impact on Children

The physical harm suffered by children engaged in hazardous occupations, such as construction and prostitution, is generally accepted. Less obvious has been the degree to which long hours and poor working conditions can damage the development of children in

[1] see `The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Street Children' World Vision 1996 and `Child Labour in Context' World Vision 1995

apparently non-hazardous industries. For example, a recent survey in Cambodia found that three in every twenty children between the ages of five and seventeen works. The majority of these children are girls, made vulnerable by occupations as domestic servants, stone-cutters or garment factory workers. 40% of Cambodian child labourers work over 40 hours per week increasing the risk of accidents as tiredness combines with poor safety conditions. Unsurprisingly more than half of these working children do not attend school. In the Cambodian province of Banteay Meanchay only 4% of working girls attend school. The survey also found that 83% of 5-14 year olds who work do so to supplement household income.

Long term injuries caused by physically demanding childhood labour can cause unemployment and impoverishment in later life, a danger which includes relatively hidden problems such as poor light or working positions. The denial of education to children also has long term consequences, closing doors on future opportunities for employment and income. In the most extreme cases exploitation can amount to a virtual death sentence for the child concerned. Children involved in prostitution are exposed to the considerable risks of HIV/AIDS. Recent evidence from Vietnam suggests a rising problem of child prostitution, with children now accounting for 11% of the estimated 66,000 sex workers. In 1996 World Vision issued new research, '*The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Street Children*' which highlighted the constant risks of violence faced by prostituted children. World Vision therefore considers the nature of exploitative child labour to include any of the following:

- malnourishment and exhaustion
- cramped conditions and poor ventilation
- intricate work affecting eyesight
- exposure to dangerous chemicals or machinery
- deprivation of play, parents and school
- exposure to physical, psychological and sexual abuse
- the employment of very young children
- the confinement or bonding of children including debt and domestic work

Impact on developing states

Children are vital to the future economic well-being of their states.

UNDP has stated that:

"High employment economies have generally invested heavily in the development of human capabilities - particularly education, health and skills....The Republic of Korea invests $150 per person in health and education, Malaysia $150. India by contrast invests only $14, Pakistan $10 and Bangladesh $5" (UNDP 1996 p7).

Many factors have contributed to the growing inequality in the global economy and wide ranging characteristics eg market flexibility, infrastructure, export-orientation, external investment and developing a local demand base, have played an important role in some economies. This paper is therefore not suggesting that education and investment in children are in themselves sufficient for economic growth. However, it does seem reasonable to conclude that countries which have consistently invested in children enjoy considerable advantages in the process of economic development. The constant pressure towards economic competitiveness and increasing export volumes have contributed to an environment in which demand for cheaper child labour has consistently grown.

Box 2 - Competitive Economies

The OECD's Labour Standards Study examined whether low labour standards had a positive or negative impact on the competitiveness of developing countries. These low standards included: child labour, forced labour, lack of freedom of association and restricted rights to organise and bargain collectively. According to the OECD:

"The study found no evidence that low-standards countries had a better global export performance than other countries; there was not a correlation at the aggregate level between real wage growth and observance of freedom of association rights; there was some positive association between sustained trade reforms and improvements in core standards; finally FDI data suggest core labour standards are not important in most OECD investor decisions. The general conclusion therefore is that a) adoption of core standards would not hurt developing countries' economic performance or competitive position (indeed, higher standards might be helpful in the longer term); and b) the failure to observe such standards does not appear to constitute an important competitive advantage.

Information taken from OECD: Towards a New Global Age, 1997

The use of child labour in growth industries, including the export sector, has created disadvantages for developing societies at the macro and micro levels. Child labour may reduce employers costs, but, it also serves to displace adult workers in contexts which often exhibit high levels of adult unemployment and under-employment. Long term disadvantages also include a significant impact on the overall health of the population. Child labour creates the potential for injuries and long term work related health problems, whilst also preventing the positive impact on health of effective education. In particular the education of girls has proved to have an impact on fundamental issues such as population growth, morbidity and mortality. Adequate nutrition in childhood is also a significant factor in promoting a healthy and productive population. The importance of these issues has led the World Bank to embark on a series of projects aimed to address children's issues, the Bank has said that:

"investing in the human capital of the poor is vital to ensure that they participate fully in the growth of the economy and that they can be productive members of society."

Basic education is a key element in developing the human capital of the poor.

Research indicates that the early years of life are critical to the formation and development of intelligence, personality and social behaviour....Thus, integrated childhood interventions that aim to improve a child's health and nutrition and increase his or her educational development can have a lasting positive effect. (World Bank, Poverty Reduction and the World Bank, 1996 pp18-19)

Tackling the Real Problem

In recognising the stark problem of exploitative child labour NGOs, governments and commercial organisations must avoid the automatic and understandable temptation to promote the immediate total prohibition of child labour. If child labour is to be ended in a sustainable way then those involved must address the reality that child labour in many developing contexts is currently an important source of family income. Unfortunately, there are no indications of the availability of the considerable resources which would be needed to replace this income should total prohibition be a realistic possibility in the short term. Research has also suggested that while a process of effective prohibition is being pursued campaigners need to consider carefully the role of less exploitative forms of labour. Non-exploitative child labour are those forms of work which respect the dignity, rights and development of the child, and can be compatible with a healthy childhood and education (this point is discussed in more detail below).

World Vision therefore advocates that immediate attention must focus on the targeting of those exploitative forms of child labour which put at risk millions of children. A further goal must be the provision of adequate resources to create income alternatives for those who have little option but to send their children out to exploitative work. Action must therefore be taken which addresses the real needs of children and families in complex developing contexts:

A Comprehensive Approach - World Vision believes that child labour can only be addressed by all those involved, governments, employers, Trades Unions, foreign importers, and communities. The ending of exploitative practices must take place at several levels. The starting point of the process is often action by Governmental, inter-governmental, Workers and industry bodies to encourage local employers to end exploitative practices. World Vision believes that the enforcement of labour codes is essential and that employers should be held accountable for the conditions in which their employees labour. World Vision believes that such labour regulations and their enforcement should adhere to international conventions governing the rights and labour of children.

Consumer Education - Consumers in developed countries have an important role to play in stimulating such enforcement and growing interest in ethical consumerism is an encouraging and welcome sign. Recognition of the positive role of ethical consumerism

does not lessen the need for awareness by all concerned that such action carries its own risks. This is shown below by the experience of the Harkin Act in the United States, consumer pressure can have unforeseen and negative effects if it simply leads to companies off-loading child labourers only for them to seek more precarious sources of income in the informal sector.

The International Legislative Framework - A number of existing Conventions, such as that on the Rights of the Child have introduced standards and acceptable limits to the use of child labour. The most important detailed existing set of standards on child labour is ILO Convention No 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. This instrument has had only a limited ratification by UN member states and has not been adopted by countries in key regions, such as South Asia. The limited impact of existing standards, and areas of confusion within the legislative framework, have resulted in a new move to establish a widely accepted Convention on the worst excesses of child labour. The new ILO Convention on the Least Tolerable Forms of Child Labour will therefore address particularly hazardous and exploitative forms of labour. It is hoped that the Convention will be finalised in 1999.

The Imperative for Alternatives - It is an absolute imperative that in ending the exploitation of children such action is accompanied by new opportunities for families to replace lost income. Without economic support children removed from hazardous child labour may simply be transferred to equally dangerous, but less easily policed, work on the streets.

Lessons from Bangladesh - Incomes and Alternatives

An indication of the potential impact of the immediate closure of opportunities for employment for children has been provided in Bangladesh. In 1993 World Vision Bangladesh predicted that the Harkin Bill, introduced in the US Congress to create trade restrictions on goods involving child labour, could result in some 70,000 children employed in the garment and textile industries being forced into more exploitative jobs as brick carriers, chippers, rickshaw pullers, rag-pickers and prostitutes. A recent Oxfam study did find that around 30,000 children who formerly worked in the garment industry are now in the more hazardous welding and sex industries[2].

Figures from 1996[3] suggest that children aged between 5-14 years still constitute some 11.6% of the total labour force in Bangladesh. It is estimated that 100,000 of these children are employed in the garment industry and local Trades Unions estimate that this represents 25%

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[2] See `Child Labour in Context' World Vision 1995 p21 and also `Ethical Shopping: Human Rights' The Economist, 3-9 June 1995 p58

[3] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, `Statistical Pocketbook 1996'

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of the industry's total workforce[4]. Recently, however, all sides involved in the child labour issue have sought to learn the lessons of the Harkin Act experience by making efforts to avoid displacing children onto the streets. On July 4 1995 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), UNICEF and the ILO to agree a transition for child garment workers from factories into schools. This followed an earlier, failed attempt to secure a similar MOU. The agreement stipulates a cessation of employment for under 14 year old children, although existing workers would only be released from employment when school places became available. Former child labourers are also to receive free education and a £5 monthly allowance under the scheme. Funding for the programme is to being provided by the ILO, UNICEF, BGMEA and private donors.

It is too early to make definitive judgements on the success of the Bangladesh scheme, initial violations by employers were noted in 1995 and early 1996. By end of 1996, however, local observers believed implementation had improved and some 315 schools had been established[5]. The scheme does at the very least represent an innovative attempt to counter the dangers inherent in terminating the employment of young children. Rather than being pushed into more hazardous industries in order to gain some form of income the MOU has provided recognition that alternative income and educational opportunities must be provided.

Box 3 - Working Together

"I remember talking with a working child and I asked her `what is it you desire most.' Her response was `I just want to sleep.'

In our country the government has taken steps to address the issue of child labour, and our supreme court has passed a recent judgement calling for further measures to tackle the problem. Many NGOs also have programmes to deal with this problem from all angles. As an agency committed to Christian principles of justice we have to have a vision of a condition where the children of the world will not have to work for a living. There are many factors which cause this problem, such as disorganised families, rural migration as well as expulsion from schools, but poverty remains most significant in the majority of cases.

An important and invisible effect of poverty which pushes children into work is the lack of access for the poor to credit facilities with fair rates of interest. All the available institutional credit agencies demand certain conditions for eligibility for loans which the poor are not able to meet. This results in their pledging their child's labour to employers who are willing to give them loans but the rates of interest are so high that the child's labour just makes up the interest while the capital amount remains unreturned. Thus, the child's bondage continues for years."

Radha Paul, National Director World Vision India.

[4] Bhorer Kagoj, 30/5/93

[5] State of Human Rights 1996 Bangladesh

Non-exploitative labour and child development

The attempt to end exploitative child labour in the garment industry of Bangladesh has been premised on co-operation by several of the parties involved. Equally as important has been the provision of resources to enable some form of compensation to child workers for lost income. In the absence of similar levels of co-operation and resources elsewhere, the campaign against exploitative child labour must avoid causing greater marginalisation through an insistence on a single approach. The experience of World Vision southern partners in some 80 developing countries suggests that we must address the conditions in which children work, and through the most immediate and practical means possible. World Vision believes therefore that in some instances it will be necessary for campaigners against exploitative child labour to look beyond prohibition to secondary, short-term, alternative approaches to the mitigation of the problem. These secondary approaches include the transition of exploitative labour into a non-exploitative phase.

This `transition' strategy would entail the implementation of adequate health and safety conditions within factories, including amongst other requirements access to adequate light, breaks, nutrition, appropriate hours and the provision of some form of education (see section - `Workers Rights and Employer's Responsibility' below). Where the labour involved is of essence hazardous or involves very young children World Vision believes that no alternative to the elimination of the labour practice exists. The use of this transitional approach represents a recognition that in some cases the rights of children as workers, including their representation by workers bodies, is an important part of the campaign against child labour.

Recognising non-exploitative labour

The International Labour Organisation, while rejecting child labour and employment, has concluded that some forms of childwork "may not be harmful to children and may even be of benefit"[6]. This is a view which is prevalent in many societies and some manufacturers have recognised constructive opportunities by taking steps to combine adequate conditions with a responsible attitude to child labour. The clothing company Levi-Strauss sought to address the issue of very young children working within two factories in Bangladesh. As a result the company did not call for the dismissal of children over 14 and provided income support for the children under 14 who were removed from the factory[7].

The key to non-exploitative child labour are the conditions and expectations faced by the child during work. A child rights approach to the situation of children dictates that children

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[6] quoted in ActionAid, `Listening to Smaller Voices' p6

[7] see `Helping Business to Help Stop' Child Labour, A report by ASI with the support of World Vision, 1996 p34

must have the right to a safe work environment, to hours which allow adequate rest, play and education and also the right to protection by both authorities and labour organisations.

Opinions on when work becomes exploitative are divided, but the debate focuses on issues such as the physical nature of the work itself, what is foregone as a result of work, the nature of the work relationship (what makes it `unfree' or exploitative) and the activities impact on future choices. World Vision believes that criteria for assessing the impact of particular types of labour and the conditions involved can be, somewhat crudely, summarised by factors such as:

- the physical nature of the work
- the work relationship (between child and employer)
- the impact it has on the child's future choices
- the age of the child (below 12yrs)
- the impact family relationships
- the cost to the child (recreation, rest)

Workers Rights and Employer's Responsibilities

The elimination of exploitative practices can be simplified to a relatively short list of generalised actions on the part of all agencies involved. The ending of employment for very young children and employment in hazardous occupations is a necessary starting point. Equally crucial is the limiting of working hours, the safeguarding of working conditions (adequate light, ventilation, breaks etc) and access to sources of nutrition and education, informal if necessary. World Vision also believes that included within the minimum conditions for the employment of children must be the provision of medical care and an emphasis on long term skill development rather than sheer production volume.

In many countries regulations exist which seek to create an adequate framework for working practices or which formally prohibit child labour altogether. Applicable UN Conventions , particularly the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have received wide ratification, in addition to the existence of instruments such as the 1956 Convention on Slavery and ILO Convention 138. World Vision accepts that several steps need to be taken to encourage all those involved to act against exploitative labour:

1. **Capacity Building** - Resources for capacity building to encourage the effective implementation of local regulations and ratified international instruments is an important step available to norther proponents of action against child labour. Capacity building requires assistance to regulatory, industry and workers bodies, such as the training of governmental enforcement officials. Whilst assisting the state in its effectiveness it must also be stressed that implementation is also made more possible, and probable, by support for local civil society groups and workers organisations

which seek to hold both state and industry accountable for conditions. The work of local advocacy organisations[8]

2. **Trans-Nationals and Overseas Production** - There is an important role for international employers to play in promoting best practice within developing contexts. World Vision has long advocated for the adoption and effective implementation of Codes of Practice by British companies employing staff overseas. The report '*Helping Business to Help Stop Child Labour*' produced by Anti-Slavery International with the support of World Vision has constructively offered industry an insight into action which can be taken to protect children working in production facilities abroad. The approach taken by both ASI and World Vision has been to stress effective action rather than the adoption of morally pleasing but poorly applied commitments.

3. **Trans-Nationals and Expatriate Staff** - World Vision has called on companies to substantially improve the training provided to their own expatriate Managers before they depart for often very unfamiliar cultural contexts. NB Selection conducted a survey of 'International Human Resource Practices in the UK' in 1994 which highlighted a disturbing indifference to the preparation of staff for service overseas, across 92 companies only 44% provided cultural training and preparation. Indifference by UK company leaves open the danger that staff working abroad will accept the often used argument 'exploitative labour for children is part of the local culture' and should not be challenged by a foreign company.

4. **Codes of Conduct** - World Vision has tried to promote responsibility on the part of UK employers and has called on all British organisations employing staff abroad to develop effective child protection policies. Such policies should consider the diverse ways in which organisations or staff can unwittingly become involved in child exploitation, including children in the workplace, as domestic help or as employees of suppliers. To further this process World Vision has issued its own Code of Practice for staff designed to ensure the highest possible standards of child protection. World Vision believes that whilst encouraging British companies to operate abroad and to engage in the world economy the Department of Trade and Industry should also promote the use of effective child protection codes by all major UK companies overseas. The previous UK administration exhibited a marked lack of interest in promoting such an approach beyond the high profile, and much criticised, area of Tourism. In a letter responding to a previous World Vision briefing former junior Minister, Timothy Kirkhope, wrote:

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[8] For a discussion of the role of BLLF see 'The State and Civil Society in Pakistan' Alan Whaites, Contemporary South Asia (1995) 4(3), 229-254

"It is not for the government to dictate to private businesses, including the tourism industry, how they should promote child protection issues. We would clearly not wish to impose on businesses any unnecessary and ineffective burden."

The letter goes on to state that:

"It is difficult to see what practical benefit would be achieved by seeking to encourage other businesses or organisation to become involved in child protection issues: and if they did, the role they should be expected to play. I would suggest that the majority of businesses in the United Kingdom have no connection with this issue and it is simply not their place to become involved."

5. Action by the UK Government - World Vision would encourage the new government to quickly distance itself from any passive approaches to these problems. World Vision hopes that the governments will take an approach of constructive engagement with both companies producing abroad, and also retailers with significant influence amongst their overseas suppliers. A step towards this by the government would be to highlight the positive role that staff training and Codes of Practice can play. World Vision has encouraged the UK to adopt Codes of Practice for government employees based abroad, such as diplomats, troops on peace-keeping duties and employees of DfID. In a written answer to a question by Joan Lestor MP given on the 17 January 1997, Jeremy Hanley MP confirmed that the UK Government has no specific guidelines for staff in respect of behaviour towards children. Instead Mr Hanley stated that:

"the general principles governing the conduct of employees of this department accord with the central framework of rules and principles of conduct set out in the Civil Service Management Code. These general principles are also set out in the Diplomatic Service Code of Ethics which was introduced in January 1996."

World Vision is concerned that this approach makes the government vulnerable to those who are willing to engage in the exploitation of children.

Recommendations

Development Assistance

It is clear that the provision of resources to assist in the elimination of exploitative child labour has significant implications for official development assistance from developed states. Developed countries can not be seen as truly engaging constructively in the process of addressing child labour while aid levels are falling. Equally delays in initiatives such as HIPC, to reduce the debt of highly indebted countries, only prolongs the economic conditions which contribute to such problems.

In providing assistance for interventions against exploitative labour the government should recognise the multi-layered nature of this problem. Funding should therefore be focused on the following areas:

1. Assistance for local capacity building

A key first step in the enforcement of existing and future regulations is the developing of local enforcement, monitoring and regulatory capabilities. The enhancement of local capacity inevitably entails an emphasis on governmental regulatory bodies, but such assistance must also be balanced by support for local civil society organisations which are able to stimulate forces creating local accountability.

2. Targeted Assistance to Communities at Risk

The UK government should develop a framework for assistance to those communities and children at risk. Existing NGO and governmental interventions which reduce or prevent levels of exploitative child labour need to be researched further to identify the most effective and replicable models. Interventions such as those by World Vision India described in Appendix A represent only a small proportion of total NGO interventions.

The creation of alternative sources of family income, and the provision of affordable community controlled credit, must be given priority within the process of identifying replicable models for local interventions. Existing special budget lines for areas such as reproductive health provide an option for the provision of funding. A further welcome step would be the adoption of a comprehensive policy on development assistance and its impact on children.

3. Support for Industry-wide Agreements

The UK government should encourage and support agreements negotiated locally between industry bodies, NGOs and regulators to end exploitative labour. Experience in Bangladesh highlights the need for a pro-active, rather than reactive, approach to establishing multi-party agreements. Such agreements can only be secured, and

implemented, with adequate funding for child allowances, educational support and training.

Support for the New ILO Convention

Legislation to regulate the employment of children is an important part of the fight against exploitative labour in every context and effective policing of such legislation is no less vital. A solid basis for such regulatory systems exists in international Conventions and World Vision believes that these will be strengthened by the proposed ILO Convention which will deal with the least tolerable forms of child labour and which should be completed in 1999.

We also hope that this Convention will gain some genuine support since it deals specifically with the very worst forms of child labour, rather than broader instruments such as 138 which have not been ratified as widely as is desirable. World Vision believes that the UK government should give full support to the new Convention whilst also making the following recommendations through the ILO text questionnaire:

1. Assistance for Alternative Incomes

World Vision welcomes the recognition given with the text questionnaire to the importance of economic and other assistance for those formerly involved in exploitative labour. However, the concern is that the text questionnaire does not currently give adequate weight to the specific need for alternative income for the children and families involved. World Vision believes that relevant sections, (such as section 9.2) should therefore go beyond reference to assistance for children. Relevant section should recognise the impact of reduced family income through the explicit mention of assistance to families. World Vision also believes that section 19 and 22 which are within the recommendation should be strengthened in this regards.

World Vision strongly recommends that section 12.b within the recommendation, which focuses on rehabilitation and assistance to children, should include action to help families. In ensuring due recognition to the linkage between exploitative child labour and income pressures Word Vision also recommends that either section 10 or the preamble which are within the actual Convention could make reference to the link between child labour and poverty. World Vision also recommends that the Convention give full recognition to the need for increased levels of development assistance if progress is to be made. It would therefore be helpful for section 10, which deals with the issue of inter-governmental co-operation, to make specific reference to the need for inter-governmental development assistance.

2. Child Trafficking

The new ILO Convention offers an important opportunity to address the serious and growing problem of child trafficking. World Vision hopes that section 10, on

international co-operation, include specific reference to inter-governmental co-operation on child trafficking and recognition that this is not the problem/fault of any single govt but is in fact the responsibility of the international community. World Vision would also recommend that to strengthen this specific area section 12.d of the recommendations be moved into the Convention. Section 12.d addresses the specific and crucial issue of identifying communities at risk in order to enable preventative action and this section should ideally be moved to Section 10 of the Convention or alternatively, reference be made in Section 10 to 12.d.

3. Effective Mechanism for Monitoring

If the new ILO Convention is to have a substantive impact on the problem of exploitative child labour it must include clear and measurable goals. Monitoring of the attainment of these goals might in the short term rely heavily on the role of the ILO but should over time become primarily a local government responsibility with report to ILO in Geneva. Any such reporting mechanism should include an explicit right for local NGOs to submit their own, parallel reports to the ILO.

Codes of Practice

An important part of the process of encouraging responsible action by local employers is for consistent standards to be observed by companies based in developed countries. Developed country governments and consumers must hold both retailers and producers accountable for the behaviour of their staff and partners overseas, without forcing upon them overly simplistic action such as the discarding of child workers.

The government can take an important step towards this by encouraging the DTI to promote Codes of Practice to British companies manufacturing abroad or purchasing from overseas producers. World Vision hopes that the UK government will recognise the vulnerability of children in all situations. It is therefore vital that all employers, including the government, employing staff overseas operate and enforce strict guidelines on employment practices and the protection of children. Such guidelines should cover all aspects of the organisations operation including recruitment, training and cultural context. Guidelines must also extend to unacceptable behaviour outside of the work environment which involve children. In practice such guidelines should be detailed rather than general thus avoiding genuine confusion on the part of staff on issues such as the employment of children as domestic help.

Appendix A

FREE FROM BONDAGE;
A Case Study of World Vision India's Work with Children in Bonded Labour

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Introduction

It is estimated that, in India, there are about 13.17 million children below 14 years of age are working for wages. In tamil Nadu, children actually constitute 10 to 14 percent of the labour force engaged in the match and fireworks industries. In North Arcot Ambedkar district alone it is estimated that some two hundred thousand children are engaged in beedi (cigarette) manufacturing.

Back in 1989, WV India's Rengampatti Project conducted a medical camp at Kottaicherri village. A boy named Pattinathar came to get treatment for scabies wearing shackles on his legs. Pattinathar, the Project Manager discovered, was bonded [pledged] by his parents to work for a beedi-mudalali [beedi making-business owner] for a loan of Rs.1100 (£19). Pattinathar had not been able to complete the production targets given to him by the mudalali, and, as a result, had been beaten with a metal rod. Following an attempt to run away, Pattinathar was shackled. His shackles would not be opened on a daily or even a monthly basis, nor for sleeping, or for bathing and going to the toilet. Sometimes for six months he would not be able to even change his shorts.

In 1994 , WV estimated that there were over 200 children in their project areas alone below 18 years of age being shackled as part of labour. As staff became aware of the number of children bonded for life in industries like the beedi manufacturing they began planning possible interventions. Pattinathar's case was taken up by the project manager with the mudalali. On February 18, 1992 with a personal contribution of Rs.1000 from WV, and Rs.100 from the boy's parents, Pattinathar was the first child released from this kind of bondage.

As well as tackling the problem within the framework of the two existing community development projects in the area in 1995, the Born To Be Free Project was created, using funds raised locally in India. The objectives were to release up to 50 children every year for four years, and to help them and their families to develop alternatives, through teaching them marketable skills of tailoring, or carpentry and wood turning, getting them back into education, and helping them meet their immediate medical needs.

As of December 1995, the results were encouraging; the Rengampatti Project had been able to facilitate the release of 103 children, the Childcare Project another 32, and the Born To Be Free Project yet another 56 children. The partnership with the community in releasing their bonded children has been instrumental in bringing about transformation both at the community and the child levels, and at the donor and World Vision levels. This Project attracted the state government's attention on child labour. The District Collector met with the project staff recently, and is now taking efforts on child labour issues in these villages.

Background to the Project Area

Kallipet village is situated in the foothills, in the Pernambut Panchayat area of North Arcot District. This area is surrounded by the mountainous terrain of the Eastern Ghats. This area was previous controlled by the Nawab of Arcot who built forts across the local countryside. Pathapalayam is another poor community. Most of the women go to the forest to collect firewood, and carry it on their heads for a distance of over 5 kilometres. They receive only Rs. 8.00 per thindu (stack) and in a day they are able to collect and bring only two stacks. In the course of this work a serious problem arises from local officials who take one stack as their share to turn a blind eye to the illegal felling of trees by these people.

The people in the project areas belong to the scheduled castes with very high rates of illiteracy. The average annual per capita income is particularly low, one estimate puts it at Rs.3000. Most of the people do not have any land. Being unskilled labourers, there is no other occupation for them other than rolling beedies. A beedi is a local cigarette made of rolled up tobacco leaf. Many children were bonded to the owners (mudalali) in the beedi trade, to do this beedi work just for not being able to pay back for few hundreds of rupees borrowed by their parents.

Bonded Labour

People in this labour group turn to the mudalalis when they are in a financial crisis. Every time they need money for marrying their daughter, or to pay for medical or even funeral expenses, repairs to their huts, they end up pledging their young sons or daughters to work for a mudalali for anything between Rs.1000 and Rs.3000. Children as young as 6 years old are taken into bondage. The bonded child is forced to work for the mudalali from 6.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m., and for which he receives only a fraction of what he would get as a free labourer. The major part of the earnings would be retained by the mudalali as interest on loans. To free the child, a parent would have to return the full principal - even if it is after six or eight years of work.

Reasons For Resorting to Loan Sharks

There are many reasons for which local families resort to bonding their children as 'security' for a loan. Living in poverty leaves most very vulnerable to sudden demands for cash. Some times poverty is sufficient in itself;

Peraisamy and his wife Saroja, both 50, live in Eriguthy village. Perisamy himself is bonded as a farm labourer. He took a loan of Rs. l, 000, and now has to work long hours to earn even the Rs. 300 he gets at the end of the month. His wife is also a coolie like him. They have four children, two sons and two daughters. Peraisamy could not look after his family on Rs.300 a month, and so ended up bonding Saminathan, his 12 year old son, in June 1994.

A family break down leaves women vulnerable;

"My husband deserted me and my children, and married another woman from K.K. Nagar. From that time I was going to the forest to collect fire wood for selling, and through that little income I was leading my family. Due to poverty I kept my daughter Saritha for Rs.1,000 in beedi bondage."

Sometimes parents need money for unexpected medical expenses. There are often no health centre in the villages, and doctors cost money. Many people would prefer not to go to the government primary health centres, simply because they had little faith in those doctors to treat them fairly and without asking for money. Poor families would not go to a doctor till things really became worse, simple because they did not have the money to spend on doctors and treatment of minor ailments;

" Two years ago a son was born... he lived for only three weeks, and then died. He had been quite sick. I took Muniyamma [my wife] and the baby to the homeopathic doctors in Pernambut, but they all said it was a hopeless case. All that cost a lot of money. I took a loan of Rs.700 from the beedi mudalali, industry owner. For that I had to mortgage Bharathi to work for him." (Mohan is bonded himself for Rs. 1,000 that he took to buy food for the family.)

Sometimes for marrying off a child...

"I was bonded for eight years, from the age of seven. My father bonded three of us brothers by taking Rs. l, 500 each against me, and my two brothers Vadivelan and Venkatesh for my sister's wedding."

Other children are bonded because their homes needed repairs;

"My husband was sick quite often and we need the money. And we have this thatched house which also required repairs. We did not have the money for this, so we had to take a loan of Rs. 500 from the beedi mudalali and sent Meshack to work for him."

Life in Bondage

Bonded children have to work for their "mudalali" [owners in the beedi industry] rolling beedis from the very small age of 7 years. They will be released for breakfast at 10 a.m. and the midday meal at 2 p.m. And from this break they need to be back to work as soon as possible, failing which they will get severe beatings from the supervisor. They are beaten with a whip or with sticks. Sometimes children who have run away from this kind of painful labour, have been caught, brought back and chained to their place of work in order to hold them there. Depending on workload children may receive one day off per week. On this day off they have to wash their clothes and do other household work. These children are paid very little, in spite of their hard work. People rolling the full beedi will be paid Rs.15 per 1,000 beedies rolled. In a week he can probably earn up to Rs.50. For covering the flap of the beedi they are paid Rs.3.00 per 1,000 beedies. This payment is made weekly.

If they come late to work, or are late returning from the break for meals, if they cannot meet their weekly quotas of beedies, then it is very likely that the child would be physically beaten. Those who attempt to run away again, are kept in chains. The child is enslaved for prolonged periods since the parents would not have the capacity to redeem their child.

Given the occupation of working with dry tobacco leaves and with little food from home, many children suffer from tuberculosis, malnourishment, and grow physically weaker. With prolonged hours spent bent over rolling beedis, many end up with protruding shoulders and bent backs.

Vanitha's story is typical. For nearly three years she had to work for the mudalali. Every morning by 6 a.m. she should report for duty, and returns home only after 10 p.m. For all this work, she could earn only Rs. 45 to Rs 75 every week, depending on her output of beedies and on the mudalali's moods.

"I go to work early at six in the morning. The assignment given to me is to roll beedies. I was rolling more than 2,000 beedies a day. Even if I fall sick for a day I will not be paid. If I go little late to work they will beat me. If I cannot roll 2,000 beedies they will beat me."
Perumal (16)

Releasing the Children

WV, with the help of the Kallipet Mahila Mandal, try to ensure the release of children from this bondage. The Mahila Mandal help the Projects identify those children who need to be freed. The project and Mahila Mandal then negotiate with the mudalali on a figure for the child's release. Importantly, we also get an agreement from the parents and the mudalalis that they would not get the children into bondage again.

> *"I went to Yesu's house and requested him to reduce the debt. That time he refused to reduce the amount. I bargained with him for one and a half hours, and finally he reduced the sum by Rs.650. The balance Rs.1,750 was paid by the Project to him on June 24, 1995 at the project office and Saritha was released from bondage. The Project got an agreement from the mother and the mudalali stating that they would not keep Saritha again in beedi work or in bondage." J.John Vincent - Project Manager.*

Rehabilitation

The children who are released either go back into regular school, into tailoring classes run by the Rengampatti Project, or into carpentry classes run by the Childcare Project. Which ever option, they also get a stipend - or have the costs of books, notebooks, clothes etc. covered by the project - as a way of replacing the Rs. 20 per week they were unable to "earn", that they were getting as bonded labourers.

Getting the children back into some kind of education is a very important step;

> *"I go to the School run by the [Rengampatti Community Development] Project. Before that I had studied up to class 4 and stopped school when I was bonded." Bharathi (12).*

At the school, the children get lunch every day, as well as the daily stipend of Rs. 2.00 as an incentive. importantly, there is also a night school for those who must work during the day.

The Tailoring, and the Carpentry Units have over the years also provided training to children who are referred to these units. Both Units actively invite orders from customers, and need to constantly develop their market base. It is good that those who have completed training are helped and motivated to use these new skills to earn incomes for themselves, and to stand on their own.

> *"Gunapathy had been in the production line only for four months, and last week he was paid Rs.180 as his wages for the week ! That is a far cry from the Rs.20 in the beedi industry. This whole sum he gives to his parents to meet their household expenses."*

The Carpentry Unit being operated by the Project is now nine years old. Over this period it has been instrumental in rehabilitating over 80 village youth from bondage in the beedi

manufacturing trade. A very specific objective of the carpentry centre was to train village youth in the carpentry and wood turning skills, so that they can become employable, or work on their own in these areas - and not go back to being forced into bondage in the beedi trade. Over these recent years this Unit has been running fairly well, serving the twin purposes of training village youth on one hand, and producing marketable goods on the other. So far it has trained 80 boys, and has supplied wood work, turned goods and furniture for orders coming from as far as Madras in the east, and from Bombay in the north.

The Carpentry Unit has not only taught a skill, but also instilled self-confidence in the boys while developing a sense of achievement and paving the way for a new life. In the Carpentry Unit a child earns Rs.90 per week as a stipend while also retaining his self respect.

"Earlier the people in my village used to call me a 'beedi boy'. But now they call me 'Carpenter Boy'! " Nagaraj (16).

"At present I am getting Rs. 8.00 as a daily stipend, as an incentive, and need to save part of it to get any tools when I plan to set up my own shop. But before that when I finish this training maybe I will start earning in this Unit itself."

The centre for the tailoring unit was at Bungalowmedu, and for carpentry in Pernambut village. At the tailoring unit, children who had been freed and in training are given Rs.8.00 as a daily stipend, from which they need to save a little for themselves compulsorily. This stipend is also part-compensation for the income lost in not rolling beedis. After the trainee learns tailoring skills, the project also helps the trainee purchase a sewing machine by paying part of the machine cost. The balance would come from the savings from the daily stipend the Project gives to the trainee. The machines are kept in the Centre where they get into the production business.

"I attend these Special Tuition classes in the centre from 4 to 5 every evening, along with the others who have been freed. From 9.30 in the morning to 4 we study tailoring...I am now earning about Rs. 200 in a month. Sometimes less."

Prevention

In many families both parents had to go out of the home to work, to earn their daily wages which would barely make both ends meet. In many families it would be necessary for older children also to work, and even then after so many members of the family labour long hours for a daily wage, the family would still not be able to meet its most basic necessities of food, clothing, education, medical needs and shelter.

Housing - The project in its assessment of the factors weakening the socioeconomic status of the poor community identified housing' as one of the key areas needing intervention. Loans for repairs, or to pay landlords, were a major factor leading to debt bondage. The

project consulted the Village Development Association and involved a process of community owning the housing programme right from the planning stage. Sensitivity was needed by the community leaders as the intervention progressed. The community's history of poverty and internal tensions, created by their dependency on landlords, made it very difficult for the leaders to decide on criteria for eligibility, and finalise the list of 25 families for providing them tiles for their roofing.

Alternative Income Sources - Two years ago the women of Pathapalayam Mahila Mandal identified, in a meeting with project staff, the need for an additional income. Economic dependency on the Reddis (the landlords) and the middlemen, for their labour and sale of firewood respectively made the women choose an income generation scheme as the first project intervention. Several options were considered by the Village Development Association, and rearing goats was felt most appropriate for their economic improvement. Families who received a goat or a kid have multiplied their animals by an average of three. These livestock are assets, which means an enhanced economic status for them. In addition, many families have sold the male kids at an average price of Rs. 200 per animal.

Many of the women converted the money earned from raising and selling goats, into a gold ornament which, an asset over which they would retain control. The decision to buy gold was a medium term strategic decisions for these families since during the agricultural lean season, gold ornaments could be used to raise loans from banks, thereby preventing the need to turn to the high interest loans of the moneylender. In September 1993 the Kallipet Mahila Mandal had taken a loan for ten of its members from the Rengampatti Project of Rs. 300 each, to purchase raw materials - tobacco leaves, string, etc. - to meet costs incurred in their work. Similarly, 5 members took loans to buy supplies for coconut leaf weaving. This would avoid the problem of unnecessarily paying money lenders exorbitant rates of interest if Mandal members were to take loans from them.

Health Services - The costs of medical care were identified by community members as a significant reason for taking out loans from factory owners. The Kallipet Mahila Mandal had approached the government's Primary Health Centre [PHC] for regular health checks for pregnant women, ante- & post-natal care, and family planning programmes in their area. With the help of the project and the government's Field Publicity Department, the Mandal has screened films on AIDS awareness, social evils, and on health. The MM Secretary, is also responsible for keeping track of the health work being done in the villages under the government scheme. For example, all pregnant women are followed up, and details recorded in a register which would carry information month-wise on what kind of checks the women have had, what ante-natal medication and supplementary feeding they were given, whether they have been sick and if so what kind of treatment was received. A register is maintained for villages in each sub-centre. There are six PHC sub-centres that M.M. is responsible for in that area.